

### 3 Degrees

BY ROB COOK

*For Arno Penzias*

*The universe was born billions of years ago in an explosion whose afterglow still permeates every corner of existence: every atom, every star, every fingernail. Physicists call it the cosmic background radiation, and over the eons it has cooled to 3 degrees above absolute zero and become very dim. Its detection in 1964 confirmed the Big Bang theory.*

Even the universe was young once  
but though it was small  
its events were immense  
and shaped the course of all that followed  
the matter inside us  
the starlight around us

No memories remain of that formative time  
but its afterglow is everywhere  
faint but unmistakable —  
three degrees in the background  
pervading our world  
whether we see it or not

Childhood's afterglow can be subtle  
a plaintive plea in our smile  
a wooden tone in our voice  
a muffled cry in our heart —  
the background radiation  
pervading our life  
whether we see it or not

— *Visitant*, 10/26/2021  
[visitantlit.com/2021/10/26/3-degrees](https://visitantlit.com/2021/10/26/3-degrees)